

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
NORTHERN DIVISION

ROBERT WAYNE ANNABEL,

Plaintiff,

Case No. 2:07-cv-30

v.

Honorable R. Allan Edgar

UNKNOWN SCHERTZ, et al.,

Defendants.

/

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

This is a civil rights action brought by a state prisoner pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

The Court has granted Plaintiff leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*, and Plaintiff will pay the initial partial filing fee when funds are available. Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act, PUB. L. NO. 104-134, 110 STAT. 1321 (1996), the Court is required to dismiss any prisoner action brought under federal law if the complaint is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2), 1915A; 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c). The Court must read Plaintiff's *pro se* complaint indulgently, *see Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972), and accept Plaintiff's allegations as true, unless they are clearly irrational or wholly incredible. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 33 (1992). Applying these standards, I recommend that Plaintiff's complaint be dismissed for failure to state a claim.

Discussion

I. Factual allegations

Plaintiff is presently incarcerated with the Michigan Department of Corrections at the Marquette Branch Prison (MBP). He complains of events that occurred while he was incarcerated at the Alger Maximum Correctional Facility (LMF). In his *pro se* complaint, Plaintiff sues LMF Residential Unit Officers (Unknown) Schertz and (Unknown) Kleeman, claiming a violation of his Fourteenth Amendment procedural due process rights.

On April 19, 2006, Plaintiff was transferred from MBP to LMF. He received portions of his personal property on May 10, 2006, and September 15, 2006. Plaintiff, however, failed to receive a substantial amount of his personal property and several items he did receive were damaged. The receipt forms provided to Plaintiff revealed that his property was packed by Defendants Schertz and Kleeman. Plaintiff claims he failed to receive a hearing as required by policy to determine if his property exceeded allowable limits due to legal property, *see* MICH. DEP'T OF CORR., Policy Directive 04.07.112, ¶ N (effective Nov.15, 2004), or constituted contraband. *See id.* at ¶¶ GG and HH. For relief, Plaintiff seeks an order directing Defendants to restore all of Plaintiff's personal property, compensatory damages of \$100.00, and punitive damages of \$500.00.

II. Failure to state a claim

A complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted when it is clear that no relief could be granted under any set of facts that could be proved consistent with the allegations of the complaint. *Jones v. City of Carlisle*, 3 F.3d 945, 947 (6th Cir. 1993). To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege the violation of a right secured by the federal Constitution or laws and must show that the deprivation was committed by a person acting under

color of state law. *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988); *Street v. Corr. Corp. of Am.*, 102 F.3d 810, 814 (6th Cir. 1996). Because § 1983 is a method for vindicating federal rights, not a source of substantive rights itself, the first step in an action under § 1983 is to identify the specific constitutional right allegedly infringed. *Albright v. Oliver*, 510 U.S. 266, 271 (1994).

A. Property deprivation

Plaintiff's due process claim is barred by the doctrine of *Parratt v. Taylor*, 451 U.S. 527 (1981), *overruled in part by Daniels v. Williams*, 474 U.S. 327 (1986). Under *Parratt*, a person deprived of property by a “random and unauthorized act” of a state employee has no federal due process claim unless the state fails to afford an adequate post-deprivation remedy. If an adequate post-deprivation remedy exists, the deprivation, although real, is not “without due process of law.” *Parratt*, 451 U.S. at 537. The rule announced in *Parratt* has been extended to cover intentional deprivations of property as long as the deprivation was not done pursuant to an established state procedure. *See Hudson v. Palmer*, 468 U.S. 517, 530-36 (1984). Because Plaintiff's claim is premised upon allegedly unauthorized acts of state actors, he must plead and prove the inadequacy of state post-deprivation remedies. *See Copeland v. Machulis*, 57 F.3d 476, 479-80 (6th Cir. 1995); *Gibbs v. Hopkins*, 10 F.3d 373, 378 (6th Cir. 1993). Under settled Sixth Circuit authority, a prisoner's failure to sustain this burden requires dismissal of his § 1983 due-process action. *See Brooks v. Dutton*, 751 F.2d 197 (6th Cir. 1985).

Plaintiff has not alleged that state post-deprivation remedies are inadequate. Numerous state post-deprivation remedies are available to him. First, a prisoner who incurs a loss through no fault of his own may petition the institution's Prisoner Benefit Fund for compensation. MICH. DEP'T OF CORR., Policy Directive 04.07.112, ¶ B (effective Nov. 15, 2004). Aggrieved

prisoners may also submit claims for property loss of less than \$1,000 to the State Administrative Board. MICH. COMP. LAWS § 600.6419. Alternatively, Michigan law authorizes actions in the Court of Claims asserting tort or contract claims “against the state and any of its departments, commissions, boards, institutions, arms, or agencies.” MICH. COMP. LAWS § 600.6419(1)(a). The Sixth Circuit has specifically held that Michigan provides adequate post-deprivation remedies for deprivation of property. *See Copeland*, 57 F.3d at 480. Plaintiff does not allege any reason why a state-court action would not afford him complete relief for the deprivation, either negligent or intentional, of his personal property. Accordingly, I conclude that Plaintiff fails to state a due process claim.

B. Prison policy directives

Section 1983 provides a remedy for violations of federal law, not state law. *Pyles v. Raisor*, 60 F.3d 1211, 1215 (6th Cir. 1995); *Sweeton v. Brown*, 27 F.3d 1162, 1166 (6th Cir. 1994). A state’s failure to comply with its own law, rule or regulation does not by itself state a claim under § 1983. *Smith v. Freland*, 954 F.2d 343, 347-48 (6th Cir. 1992); *Barber v. City of Salem*, 953 F.2d 232, 240 (6th Cir. 1992); *Spruytte v. Walters*, 753 F.2d 498, 508-09 (6th Cir. 1985). Plaintiff does not enjoy any federally protected liberty or property interest in state procedure. *See Olim v. Wakinekona*, 461 U.S. 238, 250 (1983); *Sweeton v. Brown*, 27 F.3d 1162, 1164 (6th Cir. 1994). Defendants’ alleged failure to comply with prison policy does not itself rise to the level of a constitutional violation. *See Smith*, 954 F.2d at 347-48; *Barber*, 953 F.2d at 240; *Spruytte v. Walters*, 753 F.2d at 508-09; *Siddiq v. Edlund*, 8 F. App’x 522, 524 (6th Cir. 2001) (“The mandatory language of a prison policy no longer suffices to create a protected liberty interest,” citing *Sandin v. Conner*, 515 U.S. 472, 484 (1995)); *McVeigh v. Bartlett*, No. 94-23347, 1995 WL 236687, at *1

(6th Cir. Apr. 21, 1995) (failure to follow policy directive does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation). Therefore, I conclude that Plaintiff fails to state a cognizable claim with regard to Defendants' alleged failure to follow prison policy directives.

Recommended Disposition

Having conducted the review now required by the Prison Litigation Reform Act, I recommend that Plaintiff's complaint be dismissed for failure to state a claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(b), and 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c). Should this report and recommendation be adopted, the dismissal of this action will count as a strike for purposes of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).

I further recommend that the Court find no good-faith basis for appeal within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3). *See McGore v. Wrigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601, 611 (6th Cir. 1997).

/s/ Timothy P. Greeley

TIMOTHY P. GREELEY
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Dated: April 24, 2007

NOTICE TO PARTIES

Any objections to this Report and Recommendation must be filed and served within ten days of service of this notice on you. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C); FED. R. CIV. P. 72(b). All objections and responses to objections are governed by W.D. Mich. LCivR 72.3(b). Failure to file timely objections may constitute a waiver of any further right of appeal. *United States v. Walters*, 638 F.2d 947 (6th Cir. 1981); *see Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985).